

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-4 (Cancelled)

5. (Currently Amended) A process of connecting and fixing an extension optical fiber glass body to be extended and a pull glass member in an apparatus for extending the optical fiber glass body, comprising: an electric furnace for heating the optical fiber glass body; a first holding member positioned above said electric furnace, wherein the first holding member is arranged to move in a vertical direction relative to the apparatus and for holding and fixing a ~~fix~~ fixed end of a an upper portion of said extension optical fiber glass body to be extended; a second holding member positioned below said electric furnace, wherein the second holding member is arranged to move in the vertical direction and for holding and fixing a ~~fix~~ fixed end of a lower portion of a pulling glass member; a first axial center alignment mechanism provided between said electric furnace and said first holding member and ~~for~~ aligning an axial center of a tip of a free end of a lower portion of said extension optical fiber glass body; and a second axial center alignment mechanism provided between said electric furnace and said second holding member and ~~for~~ aligning an axial center of a tip of a free end of a the upper portion of said pulling glass member, an axial center of said first axial center alignment mechanism being met with an axial center of said second axial center alignment mechanism,

said process including the steps of:

holding and fixing the ~~fix~~ fixed end of the lower portion of said pulling glass member ~~by~~ using said second holding member;

holding a ~~the~~ tip of a ~~the~~ free end of a ~~the~~ upper portion of said pulling glass member ~~by said~~ using a pair of axial centering grips of said second axial center alignment mechanism ~~having to provide~~ a self axial center alignment function to align ~~the axial center centers of the tip tips of~~ said free ends;

~~holding and fixing the fix end of the lower portion of said pulling glass member by said second holding member;~~

releasing said pair of axial centering grips ~~axial center holding members~~ of said second axial center alignment mechanism and positioning the tip of the free end of said pulling glass member,

provisionally fixing ~~a fix~~ the fixed end of a ~~the~~ upper portion of said extension optical fiber glass body to said first holding member;

holding a ~~the~~ tip of a ~~the~~ free end of a ~~the~~ lower portion of said extension optical fiber glass body ~~by using a pair of axial center holding members of~~ said first axial center alignment mechanism and aligning ~~an~~ the axial center of said tip of said free end;

holding and fixing said ~~fix~~ fixed end of the lower portion of said pulling glass member body ~~by using~~ said first holding member;

releasing said pair of axial center holding members of said first axial center alignment mechanism and positioning the tip of the free end of said extension optical fiber glass body at a predetermined position in said electric furnace;

to thereby coincide the tip of the free end of said extension optical fiber glass body and the tip of the free end of said pulling glass member to meet ~~each~~ their respective axial centers ~~center~~.

6. (Withdrawn) A process of connecting and fixing an extension optical fiber glass body to be extended and a pull glass member in an apparatus for extending the optical fiber glass body, comprising: an electric furnace for heating the optical fiber glass body; a first holding member positioned above said electric furnace, and holding a fix end of a upper portion of said extension optical fiber glass body to be extended; a second holding member positioned below said electric furnace and holding a fix end of a lower portion of a pulling glass member; a first axial center alignment mechanism provided between said electric furnace and said first holding member and for aligning an axial center of a tip of a free end of a lower portion of said extension optical fiber glass body; and a second axial center alignment mechanism provided between said electric furnace and said second holding member and for aligning an axial center of a tip of a free end of a upper portion of said pulling glass member, an axial center of said axial center alignment mechanism being met with an axial center of said second axial center alignment mechanism,

said process including the steps of:

provisionally fixing a fix end of a upper portion of said extension optical fiber glass body to said first holding member, and holding and fixing the fix end of the lower portion of said pulling glass member by said first holding member;

holding a tip of a free end of a lower portion of said extension optical fiber glass body by said first axial center alignment mechanism and aligning an axial center of said tip of said free end; and holding a tip of a free end of a upper portion of said pulling glass member by said pair of second axial center alignment mechanism having a self axial center alignment function to align the axial center of the tip of said free ends;

holding and fixing said fix end of the lower portion of said extension optical fiber glass body by said first holding member; and

holding and fixing the fix end of the lower portion of said pulling glass member by said second holding member; and

releasing said pair of axial center holding members of said first axial center alignment mechanism and positioning the tip of the free end of said extension optical fiber glass body at a predetermined position in said electric furnace; and

releasing said pair of axial center holding members of said second axial center alignment mechanism and positioning the tip of the free end of said pulling glass member,

to thereby coincide the tip of the free end of said extension optical fiber glass body and the tip of the free end of said pulling glass member to meet each axial center.

7. (Withdrawn) An apparatus for extending an optical fiber body, comprising:

a upper holder for holding a upper end of an extension optical fiber glass body to be extended;

a lower holder, provided at a position coinciding an axial center with that of said upper holder and facing to said upper holder, holding a lower end of a pull glass member connected to a lower end of the extension optical fiber glass body, an axial center of said pull glass member being coincided an axial center of said extension optical fiber glass body, and said lower holder being pulled toward a lower portion, in response to an extension of said extension optical fiber glass body;

an electric furnace, provided between said upper holder and said lower holder, heating said extension optical glass preform;

a moving means moving at least said lower holder toward a low position to pull said extending optical fiber glass preform; and

a control means,

said control means controls the following, when extending said optical fiber glass preform in said electric furnace, and after junction of the lower end of said optical fiber glass preform and the upper end of said pull glass member by heat-melting manner,

moving the maximum temperature portion of said electric furnace to the junction portion to heat and connect the junction portion, and

controlling said movement means to lower said lower holder, to thereby move the maximum temperature portion of said electric furnace from said junction portion to the extending portion of said optical fiber glass body.

8. (Withdrawn) An apparatus for extending an optical fiber body according to claim 7, wherein a dummy member is connected to the lower end of said extension optical fiber glass body, a diameter of a lower tip of said dummy member being smaller than a diameter of the upper tip of said pulling glass member, a diameter of a upper tip of said dummy member being substantially equal to or close to a diameter of said extension optical fiber glass body, said dummy member has a semi-conical shape in the upper tip and said dummy member being formed by a material equal to that of said extension optical fiber glass body, and

wherein said control means controls the movement of said moving means to move said lower holder downward to thereby extend said extension optical fiber glass body connected to said dummy member at the lower tip thereof.

9. (Withdrawn) An apparatus or extending an optical fiber body according to claim 8, wherein said diameter of said lower tip of said dummy member is approximately 1/2 to 1/3 of the diameter of said upper end of said pulling glass member.

10. (Withdrawn) An apparatus for extending an extension optical fiber glass body, comprising:

a upper holder for holding a upper end of an extension optical fiber glass body to be extended;

a lower holder, provided at a position where an axial center thereof coincides with and an axial center of said upper holder, holding a lower end of a pulling glass member a upper end of which is connected to a lower end of said extension optical fiber glass body to coincide both axial centers, and movable downward in response to the extension of said extension optical fiber glass body;

an electric furnace provided between said upper holder and said lower holder and heating said extension optical fiber glass body;

a temperature measurement unit for measuring the temperature of an extending portion of said extension optical fiber glass body;

a speed meter for measuring an extension speed of said extension optical fiber glass body after extension;

a moving means for moving at least said lower holder downward to pull said extension optical fiber glass body after extension; and

a control means;

said control means reads the temperature from the temperature measurement unit and the extension speed from said speed meter, and controls said moving means

to continuously raise set extension speed to a predetermined steady extension speed from the beginning of the extension to the steady extension state.

11. (Withdrawn) An apparatus for extending an extension optical fiber glass body according to claim 10, wherein said control means controls the heat power of said electric furnace to raise the temperature of said electric furnace in response to the increase of said extension speed.

12. (Withdrawn) An apparatus for extending an extension optical fiber glass body according to claim 11, further comprising an extension shape measurement means for measuring a shape of said extending portion of said extension optical fiber glass body,

wherein said control means reads the shape information from said extension shape measurement means and controls the movement speed of said moving means to control said extension speed and the heat power of said electric furnace to control said heat temperature, to thereby maintain a meniscus angle of said extending portion, said meniscus angle being determined by said read shape information.

13. (Withdrawn) An apparatus for extending an extension optical fiber glass body according to claim 12, wherein said control means controls said moving means and said electric furnace so that said extending meniscus angle is kept 2 to 4 degree.

14. (Withdrawn) A method of extending an optical an fiber glass body in an electric furnace, the method including the step of raising an extension speed of an extended optical fiber glass body to a predetermined extension speed, from the beginning of the extension to the steady extension state.

15. (Withdrawn) A method of extending of an optical fiber glass body according to claim 14, said method includes a step of controlling said extension speed so that a meniscus angle at an extending portion of said optical fiber glass body is kept 2 to 4 degree.

16. (Withdrawn) A method of extending an optical fiber glass body according to claim 15, said method includes a step of raising a heating temperature of the electric furnace in response to the raise of said extension speed.